

Measure Up

Winter 2009–2010

Assessment news for twelfth-grade teachers



Did you know?

- NAEP 2010 will include assessments in geography, U.S. history, and civics.
- Approximately 1,120 twelfth-grade public schools and 32,000 twelfth-grade students will participate in NAEP 2010.
- Assessments will be conducted from January 25 to March 5, 2010.

History of the Twelfth-Grade Challenge

When NAEP results are released in The Nation's Report Card, there is considerable discussion about the results in the media and among public policymakers. The general trend in NAEP results is strong improvement for fourth-graders, moderate improvement for eighth-graders, and stagnant results for twelfth-graders. School and student participation rates are high for fourth and eighth grades, but have been lower than desirable for twelfth grade.

Both low participation and low motivation can undermine the validity and credibility of NAEP results for high school seniors. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which administers NAEP, and the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP, have been concerned about the participation and motivation of high school seniors in NAEP and their motivation to do their best.

To address this problem, NCES convened a Secondary School Principals Working Group in 2005. After discussing participation rates, student motivation, and the results for twelfth-graders, the Principals Working Group concluded that the results did not reflect the true level of achievement of their students. The Principals Working Group also

concluded that high school principals and other school leaders could help solve the problem by obtaining teacher buy-in and motivating students to show up and do their best, and that best practices for achieving high participation should be shared with principals. Their recommendations set the stage for the initial Best Practices Guide prepared for the NAEP 2007 assessment.

Student participation in 2007 increased by 13 percentage points, to 79 percent, from an all-time low of 66 percent in 2005. This improvement was across the board—in all geographic regions, in large and small high schools, and among all demographic groups. Many schools implemented ideas from the Best Practices Guide. These practices were also used in 2009, with similar results.



Addressing the Twelfth-Grade Challenge: *The Initiative to Improve Student Participation and Engagement*

Student participation and engagement on NAEP at grade 12 in public schools has been a concern for several years. The National Assessment Governing Board established committees to address this concern, and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) convened panels of high school principals, district superintendents, teachers, and students to discuss possible solutions. Out of these efforts, NCES implemented a broad set of strategies that were aimed at increasing student participation (and engagement) for the NAEP 2007 and 2009 assessments.

Highlights of the strategies include:

- early notification in May that schools had been selected for NAEP to allow administrators to include the assessment on school calendars for the following year;
- flexible scheduling on assessment day to ensure that seniors are in school and available at the time of the assessment. This includes conducting multiple assessment sessions throughout the day;
- development of a Best Practices Guide with tips for administrators and teachers to improve student participation; and
- communication and outreach efforts by NAEP State Coordinators and NAEP field staff to share Best Practices ideas and tools and to discuss and confirm strategies that the school selected to use.
- Improvements were seen across all racial/ethnic groups, for both genders, and among students on free/reduced-price lunch as well as students who were not eligible for free/reduced-price lunch.
- Increases in student participation were observed in small, medium, and large schools¹ and in schools located in rural, suburban, and urban locations.²
- Student participation rate data for 2009 is embargoed; however, preliminary results are showing trends similar to 2007.

Four strategies emerged that were associated with a statistically significant difference in average student participation rates between schools that used the strategy and those that did not:

Did grade 12 public school student participation rates increase for NAEP 2007 and 2009?

The results indicate a broad improvement in student participation in 2007:

- The overall student participation rate improved to 79 percent in 2007, an increase of 13 percentage points from the low of 66 percent in 2005.
- Participation rates improved in all geographic regions by 11 to 17 percentage points.
- holding a faculty meeting to explain NAEP and the importance of student participation and motivation;
- holding a meeting of seniors to explain NAEP and how important it is that all students selected participate and try hard;
- showing the NAEP student video of high school students talking about the importance of NAEP; and
- using school incentives to encourage student participation.

For more information about increasing student participation in NAEP, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/schools.asp>

¹ Small schools have fewer than 300 seniors. Medium schools have between 300 and 600 seniors. Large schools have more than 600 seniors.

² Location codes were developed to describe a school's location ranging from large city to rural. The codes are based on a geographic database maintained by the Census Bureau.

What incentives did schools use?

Schools were very creative in the variety of incentives they used to encourage students to “show up” for the NAEP assessment. Many of their strategies did not cost the school anything.

Examples of incentives that schools implemented include:

- a raffle for the use of the principal's parking space for a day;
- excused absences;
- extra credit;
- reduced-price prom tickets;
- raffle of gift certificates; and
- certificate for community service (provided by NAEP).

How did students perform on the NAEP 2007 grade 12 writing assessment?

- Average scale scores increased by 5 points from 2002.
- The percentage scoring at or above *Basic* increased from 74 percent in 2002 to 82 percent in 2007.

What did we learn?

The main message of the Best Practices Guide is that “students take their cues from YOU.” The adults in the school have the most impact on students and their participation, and perhaps even their motivation to try hard. In schools where the school leadership implemented strategies that demonstrated their commitment to NAEP, participation was higher.

NAEP State Coordinators reported that schools recognized that NAEP/NCES was serious about the problem of student participation and put extraordinary effort into improving the situation, including early sample notifications, a professional Best Practices Guide, customized materials for schools, and personal communications with schools. It appears that leadership from all levels had an impact on participation, from NAEP to states, from states to districts and schools, and from school leadership to teachers and students.

In summary:

Universal strategies that are provided to all schools, such as early sample notification and the Best Practices Guide are important to increasing buy-in.

It is important to know...

In 2010, assessments will be administered in the following subject areas:

- Civics
- Geography
- U.S. History
- Mathematics special study (grades 4 and 8 only)
- Writing pilot

Writing is a pilot assessment in 2010.

The writing assessment (grades 4, 8, and 12) is based on a newly developed writing framework and will be piloted at a limited number of schools in preparation for the larger 2011 assessment. At grade 4, the writing assessment will be administered with paper and pencil. For the first time, computer-based writing will be assessed in grades 8 and 12, using word processing software with commonly available tools. For more details, visit <http://www.nagb.org/publications/frameworks/2011naep-writing-framework.doc>.

What is The Nation's Report Card™ ?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For more than three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance at the national, state, and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

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Find information regarding the types of questions used on NAEP assessments or view subject-specific questions	The NAEP Questions Tool at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls
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Watch a video about best practices for grade 12 teachers to increase student participation on NAEP	The National Center for Education Statistics at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/schools.asp
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